

your story? [Applause] And, secondly, I—but the point I want to make is this doctor—the most important point this doctor has made is that the man who died is not an unusual case. That is the point I want to make. And that's—the pharmacist, Heather, was making the same point—there are lots of people like this.

And let me just use the example you mentioned. Diabetes is one of the most important examples of this. Complications from diabetes can be, as you know, dire and can be fatal. And you have a very large number of older people with adult-onset diabetes that have to be managed. It is expensive, but people can have normal lives.

The patients have to do a lot of the management of diabetes. They have to do it. And if they don't do their medication, the odds that something really terrible will happen before very long are very, very high. Almost 100 percent.

But if you look at the sheer numbers of people with diabetes alone, just take diabetes, then the story is about statistics, too, big numbers of people.

I thank you very much, sir.

She says we've got to quit. You've been great. Are you going to be the heavy? I should be the heavy.

Ms. Aldrich. No, they told me I had to tell you to be quiet. I said, really? [Laughter] I bet there are some Republicans that might like that job.

The President. Republicans—Hillary would like it. A lot of people would like it. [Laughter]

Ms. Aldrich. We are, indeed, out of time. So sorry, but they're telling me, and I have to take my cues. But Mr. President, we want to thank you so much for being here. And did you have some closing remarks that you'd like to make to us?

The President. I just wanted to say again, this is a wonderful moment. We told some said, heartwrenching stories today, and I wish I could hear from all of you. But keep in mind, this is a great thing. Our country is so blessed now. We've got the lowest peacetime unemployment in 40 years, the longest peacetime economic expansion in history. We've got this big surplus, the biggest one we've ever had. We think it will last for a

decade or more. More really, as long as we don't mess up the budget.

We have to decide. I already said what to me the choice is—it is your money. If you want it back now, you can tell your elected representatives. Nobody can say you didn't pay it in; you want it back. I don't quarrel with that. But I think it is much better for you to stabilize Social Security and Medicare, add the prescription drug benefit at a price we can afford, let people 55 to 65 pay into it who don't have health insurance, have a modest tax cut that doesn't undermine our ability to do that or our ability to invest in education and medical research and defense, and get the country debt-free.

You'd be amazed how many really wealthy businessmen come up to me and say, "You raised my taxes to balance the budget back in '93"—we did the top 1 percent, 1.5 percent got an income tax increase—"and I was mad at the time, but I made so much more money in the stock market than I paid in taxes, it's not funny."

Low interest rates make people money. The flipside of that is if interest rates went up 1 percent in this country, it would cost you more money than I can give you in a tax cut if you borrow any money for anything.

So what I think we have to say—I just want you to think about this and then communicate your feelings. And again, do it in a friendly way. Do it in the tone we've been talking about today. Tell them the stories you know, Doctor. Every doctor, every nurse, every pharmacist, every family should sit down and take the time—I know you think that Members of Congress, and the White House, the President—I have a thousand volunteers at the White House, most of them just read mail. And then I get a representative sample of that mail every 2 or 3 weeks. And we all calibrate that. And the Members of Congress, you'd be amazed how many Members of Congress actually read letters that they get. They do have an impact.

So these faxes and E-mails and letters and telephone calls, they register on people, especially if they're not done in a kind of harsh, political way, but just saying, this is what I think is right for our country. And I hope you'll do it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the gymnasium at Lansing Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor David C. Hollister of Lansing; James F. Anderton IV, president, Lansing Community College; Judith Lee, assistant executive director, Older Women's League; and John D'Agistino, president, Michigan State Council of Senior Citizens.

Remarks to the Overflow Crowd at Lansing Community College

July 22, 1999

Thank you for coming today. I wish we'd had room for everybody at the other place, but you are much cooler than we were. [Laughter] And I hope you enjoyed the event, even long distance.

I was very impressed with the people who spoke, and I think it will be very effective in trying to make the point we're trying to make. And I'm not going to make another speech, but I'm curious—how many students are here? [Applause] One of the things that I'm proudest of that we've accomplished in this Congress is, after the Balanced Budget Act, we've passed this HOPE scholarship which gives a \$1,500 tax credit for—and I hope you're all using it.

The only other point I want to hammer home that I made today is, it is very important when we debate how much should go to a tax cut—should we save Social Security and Medicare; should we pay off the debt; that we not adopt a budget—as some are up there saying. They're saying, "Okay, well, we'll do it your way on Social Security and Medicare, but give us a bigger tax cut," which would mean we'd actually have to cut Federal support for education, which I think would be a terrible mistake, because if, for no other reason, the financing of higher education—it's absolutely critical.

But there are a lot of important things we're doing in our elementary and secondary schools, too, to try to lower class sizes and put more teachers out there and do things like that. So I hope all of you will also respond to what I asked the audience over there, which is, if you agree with the position we're taking—save Social Security and Medicare, invest in education and defense and the environment, have a modest tax cut, and pay

the debt off—if you agree with that, I hope you will communicate that to the Members of the Senate and Congress from Michigan. Write them a letter, send them an E-mail, send them a fax, do something. It will make a difference.

I really hope that we can conduct this discussion and bring it to a successful conclusion. I don't think that we need to have a 2-year-long protracted political battle over this. I think this is a relatively easy decision to make if the Congress can be convinced that that's where the American people are. And I believe people of all ages think that now we have this moment which is once in a lifetime, maybe once in a generation opportunity, and we ought to take it and go with it.

So I thank you for coming, and I'm going to start down here and go over here and shake hands with anybody who wants to come by and say hello.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. in the Dart Auditorium. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on House Action on a Republican Tax Plan

July 22, 1999

Last night the Republicans went behind closed doors, not to strengthen Medicare and Social Security, but to provide political cover for their exploding tax cut. Today the Republicans charged ahead and passed a plan that threatens our ability to pay off the debt and strengthen Social Security and Medicare. The plain fact is that their tax plan is designed to explode to a \$3 trillion cost at the very time that Medicare and Social Security come under strain. It would also force deep and devastating cuts in a broad range of domestic programs, including education, the environment, and law enforcement. If the Republicans send me a plan that undermines our ability to reform Social Security and Medicare and abandons the fiscal discipline that has helped to fuel our economic growth, I will send it straight back with a veto.